

Superstition of Russian Peasant Has Been Broken By Revolution, And Village Is Developing Into New Power, Says MAXIM GORKY

By MAXIM GORKY.

Translated by Isaac Don Levine.

WHAT will become of Russia? This universal question has acquired acute interest through the demands upon the Genoa conference. In this series of articles Maxim Gorky answers with prophetic clearness from his intimate knowledge of the fundamentals of Russian national character. These articles were written in a sanatorium in St. Blasien, Southern Germany, where he spent several months fighting successfully against some ailments. The following article pictures the peasant in his new-found power and the growth in the strength of the village.

THERE is a belief that the Russian peasant is especially profound in his religion. I never felt that way, although it seems to me I observed the spiritual life of the people carefully enough. I believe that a person who is illiterate and not accustomed to think, can be neither a true believer nor an atheist, and that the road to firm and profound faith lies across the desert of unbelief.

In the course of my conversations with peasants and my observations of the mode of living of the various sects in Russia, I perceived first of all an organic, blind lack of faith in the strivings and workings of the mind. I discovered a mental attitude which one might describe as the skepticism of ignorance.

I always sensed in the attempts of the Russian sects to live separately, away from the state-controlled church, a negative attitude not only to its rites, and least of all, to its dogmas, but generally to the regime of the State and to the life of the city.

NOT DEEPLY RELIGIOUS.

But I was never able to discover in this negative attitude any original idea, any signs of creative thought, any search of new outlets for the spirit. It is simply a passive and fruitless negation of phenomena and events, the connection and significance of which their feebly developed mind is unable to comprehend.

It seems to me that the revolution has very definitely proved how mistaken were the beliefs in the profound religiousness of the Russian peasantry. Perhaps the fact that theaters and clubs were organized in village churches is not so important, although it was sometimes done, not because there was no other building suited for a theater, but for the express

purpose of demonstrating free thought.

There were cases of a coarser and sacrilegious attitude to the church, which it is impossible to explain by the popular hostility toward the priests, by a desire to offend the parson, and sometimes by some such insolent and naive curiosity on the part of the young people as this: "What will happen to me if I should desecrate something that is revered by everybody?"

But much more significant are such facts as these: The destruction of the ancient Pechersky monastery in Kiev and of the Troitsa-Sergievskaya monastery, which was of enormous importance historically and religiously, the two monasteries that were profoundly revered by the whole country, provoked no protests nor disturbances among the peasantry, although trouble was certainly anticipated by some politicians.

It was as if these centers of religious life suddenly lost all the magic power which had attracted to them believers from all corners of the wide Russian land. And yet the same peasants without thought of their lives defended with arms in hand some hundreds of thousands of poods of grain.

SAINTS' RELICS MOCKED.

When the provincial Soviets were publicly exposing the "incorruptible" relics of saints that were highly worshiped by the people, the people regarded these acts with complete indifference, with a silent, dull curiosity.

The relics were exposed with extreme tactlessness and frequently in a very rough manner, with the active participation of people of foreign race and faith, with coarse mockery at the feelings of those who believed in the saintliness and

Profound Religion Attributed to the Moujik Proves Fallacy; Regards Sacrilegious Acts with Indifference, and Endeavors to Find Own Conclusions Where Formally He Blindly Accepted.

miracle-working power of the relics. But even that called forth no protests on the part of the men who but yesterday kneeled before the sepulchers of the "miracle-workers."

I asked numerous eye-witnesses and participants of the exposures of the churchly fraud, what they felt when there appeared before their eyes instead of a well-preserved and fragrant body, a coarsely made puppet of half-dissolved bones? Some said a miracle had occurred. The bones of the saints getting knowledge of the desecration planned by the infidels had departed from their sepulchers.

Others affirmed that the fraud was perpetrated by monks only when they learned of the intention of the authorities to destroy the relics.

"They removed the real, incorruptible relics and replaced them with puppets." This is the way, almost without exception, the representatives of the old, illiterate village talked. The younger and literate peasants recognized, of course, that it was all a fraud, and said:

EVERYBODY WICKED.

"It was good work," now there is one fraud less." But then other thoughts arose in their minds, and I produce them here literally as I wrote them down:

"Now, that the tricks of the monasteries are disclosed, it is necessary to investigate the doctors and various learned folk, to expose their manipulations to the people."

I had to spend much time to persuade my interlocutor to explain the meaning of his words. Somewhat embarrassed, he said: "Of course, you don't believe in it. But they say that it is now possible to poison the wind and put an end to all living things, both men and cattle. Nowadays, everybody is wicked; nobody has any mercy left."

Another peasant, a member of a county Soviet, who styles himself a Communist, even further developed this alarming thought. "We



MAXIM GORKY.

want no miracles. We want to live in the bright light without apprehension or fear. And yet what miracles do they not scheme now! It was decided to install electric light in the villages; they say there will be less fires. All right, almighty God! Only if no mistakes occurred! Suppose you turned a little screw in the wrong direction and the whole village will catch fire. You see where the danger is?

"And let me tell you: The city folk are cunning and the village is a fool; it is easy to deceive it. There is a big scheme on hand here. The soldiers used to tell that whole regiments were slaughtered in the war by electric light."

I tried to dissolve the fears of Caliban and heard from him some sensible words: "One man knows everything and another nothing. This is the

source of all trouble. How can I believe if I know nothing?"

The complaints of the village against its ignorance are heard very frequently now, and they sound ever more menacing.

FIGHTERS CHANGED SIDES.

A Siberian peasant, an enterprising fellow, the organizer of a band of partisans in the rear of Koltchak's front, gruffly complained: "Our people are not mature yet for the events. They change sides every day, their minds are dark. We defeated once a Koltchak detachment, capturing three machine guns, a piece of artillery, a small transport, and killed about fifty of them, ourselves losing seventy-one men. As we were sitting and resting, my boys suddenly asked me: 'Isn't after all the truth on the side of Koltchak? Aren't we

fighting our own interests?" (There was a case in Siberia where a detachment of peasants and partisans changed sides between the Bolsheviks and Koltchak twenty times). Yes! I sometimes feel myself like an animal. I understand nothing. There is conflict everywhere.

"There is a certain doctor in Tomsk, a good man, who told me that you have been serying the Japanese for big money since 1905. And a certain prisoner of war, a wounded Koltchak soldier from the navy, tried to prove to us that Lenin was playing the game of the Germans."

"He had documents and it was proved there that Lenin had a correspondence about money matters with German army generals. I ordered the soldier to be shot, so as not to confuse the people, and yet long afterwards my soul was disturbed. One does not indeed know whom to believe. Everybody is against everybody else. And one is afraid to trust oneself."

I had more than a few conversations with peasants on various subjects, and generally they left in me a distressing impression. The people observe a great deal, but it is despairing how little they understand. My conversations about the relics, especially convinced me that the exposed fraud of the church has strengthened the suspicious and distrustful attitude of the village towards the city.

SUSPICION OF CITY.

It has not changed the attitude towards the clergy or the authorities but towards the city, which is regarded as a complicated organization of crafty men who live on the toll and bread of the village, doing many things which are of no use to the peasant and who seek to deceive him in every way and do deceive him.

While working as a member of "the commission for the liquidation of illiteracy" I talked once with a group of suburban Petrograd peasants on the subject of the successes of science and technical knowledge.

"Yes," said one of the listeners,

a bearded, handsome fellow, "we learned to fly in the air like birds, to swim under the water like fish, but how to live on the earth we don't know. We should have first established ourselves solidly on land and see later about the air. And we needn't waste money on these amusements."

Another angrily added: "We get no benefit from these tricks, and the expense in men and money is great. I need horse-shoes, an axe; I have no nails, and you are putting up monuments here, on the streets. It is nothing but profligacy! There is no cloth to dress the children, and you have flags here, everywhere." In conclusion, after a lengthy and pitiless criticism of the city "amusements," the bearded moujik said, with a sigh:

"If we had made the revolution ourselves there would have been peace on earth long ago, and there would be order."

PEASANT ATTITUDE.

Sometimes the peasant attitude towards the city folk finds its expression in such a simple and radical form as the following: "All the educated people should be wiped off from the face of the earth. Then it will be easy for us simple people to live. Otherwise, you will have crushed us altogether!"

In the year of 1919 the gentle villager quietly pulled off the boots and clothes of the townsman and robbed him generally, cunningly obtaining from him in return for bread and potatoes everything that he could get, whether it was a necessary or unnecessary article for the village.

One does not like to talk of the coarse derision and vengeful mockery with which the village met the hungry people of the city. Always getting the better end in the barter, the majority of the peasants tried to and did give their cheating the humiliating character of alms, which they were unwillingly contributing to "the master who has squandered his fortune in the revolution."

It was noted that the attitude towards the workman was more humane. This carefulness can probably be explained by the jocular advice of one peasant to another:

"You better be more careful

with this one. They say he ran a Soviet somewhere."

The intellectual was almost inevitably made to suffer moral torture. For instance, having fixed after a long argument the exact conditions of the barter, the moujik or his wife would indifferently tell the man whose children at home were down with scurvy:

"No, God be with you, you can go. We changed our mind. We won't give the potatoes."

When some one complained against being kept in waiting too long, he got these spiteful words in reply:

"We used to wait on your charity even longer."

INTELLECTUALS SUFFER.

Yes, whatever qualities the Russian peasant may have, he cannot boast of generosity. One might say of him that he is not rancorous in the sense that he does not remember the evil which he himself does. But neither does he remember the good done for him by others.

A certain engineer employed in peat works in the country, having become indignant at the attitude of the peasants to a group of city people who trekked into a village once in an autumn rain, and for a long time were unable to find a place where to rest and dry themselves, made a speech to the peasants on the subject of the service rendered by the "intelligentsia" in the cause of the political emancipation of the people. He received the following tart answer from the mouth of a light-haired, blue-eyed Slav:

"True, we read that your class really suffered for political activity, but it is your class who wrote it. Now, you worked for the revolution of your own accord and not because we asked you to. Therefore we are not responsible for your troubles. Let God reward you for everything."

I would not quote these words here if I did not consider them typical. I personally heard this score of times in one form or another.

But it must be emphasized that the humiliation imposed on the clever city inhabitant by the village, had one serious and instructive consequence for the latter. The village understood fully how dependent the city was on it. Previously it was aware only by its dependence on the city.

FERRERO SAYS: England, France and Germany Sacrifice Peace At Genoa

Eagerness of Two Nations to Seize Advantage at Conference Will Cause Collapse of the Meeting—Instead of Trying Seriously to Understand Each Other in Good Faith and Restore the Wrecked Fortunes of a Continent They Combat Each Other With Furious Tenacity.

By GUGLIELMO FERRERO,

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GENOA, May 13.

JUST as before!

The Genoa conference, like all those that preceded it in Europe, from the peace conference onward, is about to founder for the same causes.

Is evil, then, incurable?

Are three years of bitter disillusionment and a menacing future insufficient to act as a restorative for the peoples and governments of Europe?

At Genoa, as in previous conferences, peoples and governments, in lieu of trying seriously to understand each other in good faith and restore the wrecked fortunes of a continent, combat each other with furious tenacity concerning chimerical projects, wrangling over the possession of zero.

Herein is constituted the malediction of peace treaties.

In fact, what occurred in 1919 at Paris? The two major powers of the entente, France and England, instead of trying modestly to effect a general reconciliation of Europe by means of mutual concessions and some wise renunciations, strove after a grander and loftier end that appeared to secure for them the safety of peace with advantages in proportion to the greatness of their sacrifices.

England desired to secure for herself the supremacy of Asia and the seas; France, if not exactly a hegemony, at least a preponderance in Europe that should permit her at any moment to secure for herself an invincible anti-German alliance.

To obtain these two goals England and France sacrificed peace and everything else, and now are involved in dumb but tenacious strife that has enhanced the already tremendous world disorder. Yet those two aims were chimerical because after the world war there was not room for a

treating with Russian affairs, from the discord between France and England, Germany is seeking to profit so as to eliminate both and become herself the leading power in exploiting Russia.

The now famous Russo-German treaty, it is unexpectedly divulged, is the first fruit of this policy. If matters continue thus the most certain result of the conference will be the intensifying of the discord

between England, France and Germany.

Added to the other causes that divide and render these three states suspicious, Russia must now be added. And this although—and herein lies the tragedy—this Russia for which three great states contend is a mirage existing only in their imaginations.

France, England and Germany are contending about a phantom.

Russia has fallen into such disorder that for many long years she will not be able to conclude any treaty of value with any power on earth.

Individual Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans, if they choose, like Italians and Americans, can venture to Russia and endeavor at their own risk to do business, but the various states cannot actuate in Russia with Russia in any vast

economic, political or military schemes, because there does not exist a government legitimate or powerful enough to furnish the necessary guarantees.

Note, for example, what occurs concerning debts. France and England endeavor to induce the Soviets to recognize the pre-war liabilities, according to a five-year moratorium.

Germany, on the other hand,

with her famous treaty, has forgiven Russia all her debts.

It would appear as though these two policies are radically opposed. In fact, the English and French have severely reprimanded the Germans for having compromised the outcome of the negotiations they were conducting to obtain recognition of the Russian debts.

TWO POLICIES DIFFER.

But this is mere talk, and nothing else. The truth is that the two policies differ only as regards form—for each faced the same reality—the bankruptcy of Russia and her inability to pay.

The Germans frankly recognize this impossibility and condone the debts which they know they can never collect—that is to say, they renounce that which is definitely lost.

The French and English, on the other hand, recognize this impossibility indirectly, disguising it by the device of a five-year moratorium.

There is no reasonable person who believes for a moment that between now and five years from now Russia can pay her debts. The moratorium of five years is an expedient in order to not have to brutally tell the English and French creditors that their money is lost and to keep alive theoretically title to credits in order to gradually negotiate their renunciations.

France, England, and Germany, therefore, appear to be struggling frantically, the first two to force Russia to pay her debts, the other to assist her in obtaining universal condonation of her debts.

MONEY IS LOST.

In reality, the money is lost. Germany has recognized while England and France are taking time to recognize that fact.

Germany endeavors to negotiate without delay. France and England desire to negotiate gradually. All this huge struggle at Genoa concerning Russia's debts is fought around a shadow. Nor is the dreaded alliance between Germany and Russia more substantial in fact. Half of Europe already sees Germany and Russia united in an attempt to secure revenge.

In France and England there is proclaimed a need to reconstruct the alliance that conquered Germany in the world war.

Thus Europe seems about to convert herself, like after the war of 1870, into two rival groups commencing preparations for a new war.

But these are also dreams and idle talk.

Russia and Germany are both so exhausted and impoverished that for half a century they will not be able to put forth any serious military efforts. Nor can England and France boast of being in much better case. England no longer has an army capable of waging a continental war, because the English people are ready for anything rather than to again tolerate conscription. France is weary, bowed down with debts and weighted with taxes—she, too, needs economies in the matter of men and money.

Discord, too, between the two nations is too acute and profound to admit of a true and serious alliance.

In short, the outlook is depressing. After having spent their blood and strength in a world war to defend their very lives, great powers consume the small residue of life left to them to fight sterile diplomatic battles, which no longer have any real serious object.

After the warfare with cannons they are now fighting with phantoms.

The Genoa conference is a small amphitheater where these last combats are fought by means of specters, to which the great powers are invited as spectators. The little states of Europe asking them to believe that they are engaged in repairing their common fortunes.

DOOMED TO STERILITY.

The Genoa conference is doomed to sterility like its predecessors because the sincere and profound desire for reconciliation has not yet been born in the four great states of Europe on which the destiny of the Continent depends—Italy, France, England, and Germany.

Only a reconciliation between the major combatants like that made in 1815 could save Europe. Instead of that today, not only do France and Germany not desire to become reconciled, but Italy, France and England are only thinking of quarreling among themselves.

Until when? In the meantime misery increases. Governments are weakening. Peoples are becoming exasperated. Months and years pass. Clepsidra is constantly emptying. To save themselves Destiny has confided to the nations of Europe a limited space of time—

And if this ends?

Human Voice Fixed on Magnetized Wire Permits Correction; Holds Record Many Years

By WM. B. HALE.

BERLIN, May 13.

HOW should you like to have your house equipped with doors which open magically, when you speak some such phrase as, perhaps, "Open, Sesame!"

How would your little boy like to possess a toy locomotive which starts, stops, runs fast or runs slowly as the lad commands?

Such are some of the wonders actually achieved by Dr. Curt Stille, the sound wizard of central Europe. These are mere toys as yet. A dozen other of his inventions are still in the toy stage, but yesterday I witnessed and heard in his study at Potsdam a demonstration of a perfected device that promises to be of wide utility, and is certainly astonishing in its already accomplished results and in its possibilities. It was announced at the Leipzig fair this year.

SAME THING AT GENOA.

The same thing has happened at Genoa.

Instead of trying to reconstruct Europe, France, England, and Germany wrangled over Russia as the future hope of the European continent.

The English government imagined that it desired this conference above all for the purpose of acting as peace mediator between Bolshevik Russia and the rest of the world in the hope of securing for England a privileged position in Russia, subjugating that great country for herself as a colony.

But the French government won't hear of a reconciliation with the Bolsheviks because it knows that as long as they govern Russia that country will be held as a suspect and disliked, while the fruits of reconciliation would be gathered by England alone.

Constrained to accept the conference, France has limited its scope, takes part with diffidence and ill will, and would not be displeased if it failed.

New Principle Used by the Edison of the Old World Perfects Dictaphone That Cans Conversation for Future Use.

Turning from the receiver, I said to Dr. Stille: "I hope your friend, whoever he or she maybe, doesn't know Shakespeare particularly well because I am sure now that it isn't 'guided fools,' but 'lighted fools' the way to dusty death."

"We will change it, then, and make it right," said my host, and touched one of four buttons on a small attachment to the telephone. "Listen for a moment!"

In a moment there came back to my astonished ears my own voice. When we reached the misquoted phrase, Mr. Stille touched another button and said: "Just speak the word 'lighted.' I have erased the wrong word."

Dimly realizing that we were making some sort of a phonetic record, I listened to the repeated declaration, this time corrected. Two minutes later a young woman appeared from an adjoining room and handed me a typewritten copy of Macbeth's soliloquy.

VOICE FIXED ON WIRE.

There is no name for the invention yet. Call it for the moment the electro-magnetic dictating machine. It makes a record of the human voice, or of any sound, on a thin wire capable of running for several hours. This record may be heard immediately or at her convenience by a stenographer in another room; be repeated back to the speaker, or be laid aside for any future contingencies.

The first practical use of the device is to supplant the old-fashioned dictaphone, with its cum-

brous mechanism, its rubber tube and its wax cylinders, which have to be scraped off by the office boy, and on which an error of dictation was fatal.

What a boom and a blessing to the tired business man to lift up a neat little receiver and speak into it his thoughts and his directions, knowing that, by touching a button, he can entirely revise—reverse—them. What a boom and a blessing to know that, by touching another button, he can provide himself with an unassailable, permanent record of any telephone conversation which might later be called into question.

WILL HOLD FOR YEARS.

The new dictaphone passes a moving reel of fine steel wire across the poles of the electro-magnet. The steel wire is magnetized by the current from the electro-magnet—magnetized at each passing point in proportion to the strength of the electro-magnet at the moment of its passing.

Delicately modulated by the vibrations of the speaker's voice, the electro-magnet writes upon the passing steel wire (call it "tape") a record of itself. The steel wire rolls up on a spool. It has only to be unreeled past the poles of a second electro-magnet to deliver its record into a telephone receiver, either at any immediate moment or in after years.

Furthermore, the steel wire requires only to be guided past the poles of the third magnet if it is desired to magnetize it as a whole or at any point. Needless

to say, the mechanism which renders it possible to control the movements of the steel wire by a few buttons is the elaborate result of a number of years of labor. The machine into which I talked had been in use for four years in the inventor's house. It was as neat and compact as the ordinary telephone at one end and at the other end as the ordinary stenographer's desk.

PAID EDISON A VISIT.

The idea of recording sound on a magnetized wire is not new. It originated with the Dane, Poulsen, in the late nineties. To make it practical there was established in America in 1911 a company, I believe, called the Telephon Company. Mr. Stollwerck, the chocolate manufacturer, had become fascinated by the problem of sound reproduction through his acquaintance with Mr. Edison in America. Stollwerck had also great confidence in the genius of Stille, and in 1913 brought him and Mr. Edison together in Berlin.

In 1914 the Telephon Company made Stille an offer to come to America. He engaged to come, but was prevented by the outbreak of the war. He was sent to a government laboratory, provided with assistants, and put to work on methods of wireless control.

After the war, Stille resumed work on his private inventions, in a laboratory provided for him by Stollwerck.